

**Active management of labour: the Dublin experience.** By K O'Driscoll and D Meagher. 2nd ed. (pp 204. Graphs. £9.95). London: Baillière Tindall, 1986.

That a second edition of this book makes its appearance so soon after the first edition (1980) is in itself a recommendation. The authors and their colleagues express views that have evolved from their experiences with some 150,000 deliveries. Many will not necessarily agree that the duration of labour should be defined as "the number of hours a woman spends in the delivery unit from the time of admission until the time the baby is born". However, the point is made that this is the period that is relevant to the management of labour in clinical practice.

The chapters (5 and 26) discussing the importance of having a clear understanding of what is meant by dilatation and effacement of the cervix are excellent and that fact that labour has commenced only when dilatation of the cervix has started is again emphasised because it is so fundamental a concept to labour and its management. The graphical representation of the events in labour are most valuable and for those who are involved in clinical practice their superiority over the written or verbal account of labour is unquestionable. The chapters on the "Care of the Fetus" and "Caesarean Section Rates" are very informative and should provide every obstetrician with much food for thought.

In conclusion, the authors are to be congratulated on what is an important contribution to obstetrics, and it is recommended that all midwives and obstetricians should read this book so that they will have the opportunity to reflect on many of the matters discussed, particularly in relation to their own management of labour.

JMGH

**MCQs in psychiatry.** By C Grant, G McDonald and P Bell. (pp 123. £7.95). Hemel Hempstead: Pastest, 1986.

In asking me to review this book, the editor suggested that I say what I really thought about multiple choice questions (MCQs). Did he hope for startling revelations about the futility of this form of assessment? My own view is very much in favour of the use of carefully constructed MCQs, which bring a degree of objectivity to the assessment of medical knowledge, provided of course they are combined with some additional tests of clinical competence and basic literacy. Making a true/false decision concentrates thinking wonderfully, and is an excellent training for doctors who above all else must be prepared to make decisions and live with them.

This book is aimed at candidates for the MRCPsych examination, and the authors hope that it will be of use to those taking the MRCP and MRCGP, which both contain questions in psychiatry. The introduction contains some comments about the approach to MCQs which, although not original, bear repeating. The questions are wide-ranging and drug therapy, statistics, psychology, neuroanatomy and clinical phenomenology are well covered. There is a lack of questions testing clinical judgement, but that is a problem with most books of MCQs. In general I could find few faults with the sample of questions which I looked at in more detail. Inevitably one could pick out a few minor defects of spelling (page 54, question 36; "tuberosse sclerosis"), question construction (page 27, question 46; obviously only one correct answer, where 5 true/false options are given), or accuracy (page 5, question 19; Parkinson's disease as a cause of pseudobulbar palsy). My criticisms are minor ones, and I have no doubt that this book will be read with profit by the examination candidates for whom it is intended.

PB

**The management of the acute coronary attack.** The J Frank Pantridge Festschrift. Edited by J S Geddes. (pp 128. £15.00). London: Academic Press, 1986.

In the foreword to this book, Professor Julian, President of the British Cardiac Society, pays tribute to the introduction of mobile coronary care in Belfast in 1966, as a milestone in the history of cardiology and indeed of medical practice. In its own way this book is also a milestone on the pathway towards better management of the acute coronary attack. A distinguished international group of cardiologists met in Belfast in March 1986 to pay tribute to Professor Frank Pantridge, and in their presentations and discussions have provided an up-to-date assessment of many aspects of the problem. The impact of mobile coronary care on medical practice in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the USA is analysed and the views of the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health and Social Services at the Elephant and Castle, London, on future UK policy are presented.

Further prospects for prevention of arrhythmias and for correction of ventricular fibrillation by pharmacological or by electrical means, and the community problems of making these skills and techniques available where and when they are needed are also discussed.

Milestones should be clearly inscribed, easily visible and placed at appropriate intervals along the way. Dr John Geddes has been successful in the first two of these matters — in the production and editing of this volume. While the exact location of the next milestone still remains uncertain, there is no doubt that this *festschrift* will guide and stimulate those who set out to find it.

DRH